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Citizens Health Care Working Group  
7201 Wisconsin Avenue  
Suite 575  
Bethesda, MD 20814

Dear Members of the Citizens Health Care Working Group

Thank you very much for the opportunity to provide comment on the recommendations of the Citizens' Health Care Working Group. As a hospice company, we're especially interested in any organization that voices an interest in health care reform that considers the entire continuum and that takes the time to consider a broad-based vision for what it takes to provide people with humane, respectful, and technically clinically excellent health care.

The bottom line is this:  
**Your report got it right.**

By focusing on health information technology (including electronic medical record systems), public reporting, and evidence-based best practices, you're helping to build a strong framework and ensure that quality remains a focal point for any health care financing methodology. Your recommendations to develop and expand integrated public/private community networks of health care providers also get to the heart of meeting consumers where they are – on a local level. By focusing on integration and collaboration, this helps to ensure open access to care delivery and provides incentive for working together, rather than encouraging exclusion and competition.

We were especially delighted to see the attention paid to hospice and palliative care in "Recommendation 6." End-of-life care can no longer be an afterthought in the health care continuum, nor can it be considered as an ancillary or extraneous service by our fellow core health care providers. Your recommendations – especially related to education, financing, and meeting the needs of terminally ill patients and their families in their environment of choice – demonstrate a deep understanding both of the value of the hospice benefit and of the need for American health care to reassess its priorities and value systems. Far too few people are willing to talk about end-of-life care, and we're hopeful that your report will be a tremendous catalyst for positive change

You're absolutely right in saying that health care should work for all Americans ... at all stages of their life. And we recognize that it's through efforts like yours that we can broaden the public consciousness and pursue the regulatory changes necessary to ensure the achievement of this noble objective.

If there's anything we can do to support your efforts – especially as they relate to end-of-life care – please feel free to contact us at (480) 648-4530. We would very much welcome the opportunity to be of assistance and would be delighted to be part of a much-needed solution for the future of American health care.

With our sincere thanks and appreciation,

  
Richard R. Slager  
Chairman and Chief Executive Officer

  
Todd R. Coté, M.D., FAAFP, FAAHPM  
Chief Medical Officer